



COMMITTEE ON  
**EDUCATION  
& LABOR**  
REPUBLICANS

**COMMITTEE  
STATEMENT**

---

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader  
Committee on Education and Labor Hearing:  
“Examining the Policies and Priorities of the U.S. Department of Education”  
June 24, 2021**

(As prepared for delivery)

"Americans suffered greatly in the past 15 months. Far-reaching government shutdowns to flatten the curve for two weeks turned into permanent stay at home orders. Business grounded to a halt. Millions of individuals lost their jobs. America's school children, if they received any instruction at all, learned their course material by staring listlessly at a small screen for hours every day.

Families did the best they could under the trying circumstances. Our initial instinct to preserve life was noble.

Trusting virologists at the outset of the pandemic made sense because there were so many unknowns. They are scientists. Surely as more evidence became available, as natural experiments ran their course, government leaders with access to the latest data would modify their response accordingly. Evidence of the novel coronavirus's negligible effect on children grew to levels impossible to ignore.

But nothing changed. Blue state politicians forced children to spend their lives indoors and away from friends and loved ones. Democrats, including high-ranking officials in this administration, discarded the scientific method in favor of narrow political interests and their teachers union allies.

Democrats' actions have consequences.

Low-income and minority students suffered disproportionately from school closures. One study estimated the average student's learning loss would be 10 months, but that number increases to as many as 16 months for students of color.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal a tragic mental health deterioration amongst our country's youth. Emergency room trips caused by potential suicide attempts by children aged 12 to 17 rose 22 percent in the summer of 2020 and 39 percent in the winter of 2021. Unnecessarily long shutdowns did incalculable harm to those children, their families, and their communities.

President Biden's bloated budget recognizes the damage Democrats' shutdown policies have done to our kids, but his proposed solution creates further harm for this generation. It mortgages our children's future on duplicative, unnecessary, and unconstitutional programs.

While the Secretary will likely focus today on all the expensive new program proposals in the President's budget that have no hope of becoming law, Committee Republicans cannot help but notice the preventable \$1 trillion student loan repayment disaster looming on the horizon. Federal student loan borrowers have not had to pay back a single penny since March 2020, but the repayment and interest rate freeze ends on September 30. To date, Secretary Cardona has not communicated his plan to transition these loans from inactive to repayment status. The pandemic is over, and I expect the Secretary to take ownership of his bureaucracy's responsibility to America's students and taxpayers.

Other priorities of Secretary Cardona's Department of Education are not inspiring the American people's confidence in this administration.

He is using the application process for the American History and Civics Education program to promote Critical Race Theory. Indoctrinating children is a violation of federal law. Critical Race Theory is contrary to the American ideal of judging people on their character, not their physical appearance.

Secretary Cardona has failed to make substantive progress toward protecting college students from attempts by our foreign enemies to influence campuses. This administration has neither opened nor closed any investigations into the donations institutions received from, or contracts they entered into, with

adversarial foreign sources. China should not be given free rein on our college campuses.

Secretary Cardona is also working to overturn Title IX regulations that guarantee the rights of both sexual assault survivors and the accused. Our constitution guarantees the right to due process. Secretary Cardona must protect students who have survived sexual assault and uphold the ability of the accused to use the same constitutional rights enjoyed by his boss and notable other Democrat elites.

There are good reasons why the word education does not appear in the Constitution. Education is done best when it is handled at the local level. The Department of Education is incompetent. The solution is not more of the same, which is what the President's budget represents, but less of what has sidetracked our country's educational system – the Department of Education itself.

I look forward to hearing how Secretary Cardona will reverse course and empower families to make the educational decisions that are best for them."

###